

**U.S. Department of Education**  
**2016 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program**

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[X] Public or [ ] Non-public

For Public Schools only: (Check all that apply) [X] Title I [ ] Charter [X] Magnet [ ] Choice

Name of Principal Mrs. Randi Scott Howard

(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., etc.) (As it should appear in the official records)

Official School Name John P. Freeman Optional School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 5250 Tulane Road

(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Memphis State TN Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 38109-7510

County Shelby County

Telephone (901) 416-3156

Fax (901) 416-3127

Web site/URL

<http://www.scsk12.org/schools/jpfreeman.es/site/index.shtml>

E-mail scotthowardrk@scsk12.org

Facebook Page

<https://www.facebook.com/JohnPFreemanPanthers>

Twitter Handle

rs

Google+

YouTube/URL

Blog

Other Social Media Link

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2 (Part I-Eligibility Certification), and certify, to the best of my knowledge, that it is accurate.

Date

(Principal's Signature)

Name of Superintendent\*Mr. Dorsey Hopson II

(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

E-mail mcs\_supt@scsk12.org

District Name Shelby County Schools

Tel. (901) 416-5300

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2 (Part I-Eligibility Certification), and certify, to the best of my knowledge, that it is accurate.

Date

(Superintendent's Signature)

Name of School Board

President/Chairperson Mrs. Teresa Jones

(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2 (Part I-Eligibility Certification), and certify, to the best of my knowledge, that it is accurate.

Date

(School Board President's/Chairperson's Signature)

The original signed cover sheet only should be converted to a PDF file and uploaded via the online portal.

*\*Non-public Schools: If the information requested is not applicable, write N/A in the space.*

## Part I – Eligibility Certification

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The signatures on the first page of this application (cover page) certify that each of the statements below, concerning the school's eligibility and compliance with U.S. Department of Education and National Blue Ribbon Schools requirements, are true and correct.

1. The school configuration includes one or more of grades K-12. (Schools on the same campus with one principal, even a K-12 school, must apply as an entire school.)
2. The public school has met their state's accountability requirements (i.e., avoided sanctions) in participation, performance in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics, and other academic indicators (i.e., attendance rate and graduation rate) using the most recent accountability results available for the year prior to nomination.
3. To meet final eligibility, a public school must meet the state's accountability requirements (i.e., avoided sanctions) in participation, performance in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics, and other academic indicators (i.e., attendance rate and graduation rate) for the year in which they are nominated (2015-2016) and be certified by the state representative. Any status appeals must be resolved at least two weeks before the awards ceremony for the school to receive the award.
4. If the school includes grades 7 or higher, the school must have foreign language as a part of its curriculum.
5. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2010 and each tested grade must have been part of the school for the past three years.
6. The nominated school has not received the National Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, or 2015.
7. The nominated school has no history of testing irregularities, nor have charges of irregularities been brought against the school at the time of nomination. The U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school's application and/or rescind a school's award if irregularities are later discovered and proven by the state.
8. The nominated school or district is not refusing Office of Civil Rights (OCR) access to information necessary to investigate a civil rights complaint or to conduct a district-wide compliance review.
9. The OCR has not issued a violation letter of findings to the school district concluding that the nominated school or the district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes. A violation letter of findings will not be considered outstanding if OCR has accepted a corrective action plan from the district to remedy the violation.
10. The U.S. Department of Justice does not have a pending suit alleging that the nominated school or the school district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes or the Constitution's equal protection clause.
11. There are no findings of violations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in a U.S. Department of Education monitoring report that apply to the school or school district in question; or if there are such findings, the state or district has corrected, or agreed to correct, the findings.

## PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

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Data should be provided for the most recent school year (2015-2016) unless otherwise stated.

### DISTRICT

1. Number of schools in the district (per district designation):
- 117 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
  - 43 Middle/Junior high schools
  - 45 High schools
  - 12 K-12 schools
- 217 TOTAL

### SCHOOL (To be completed by all schools)

2. Category that best describes the area where the school is located:
- ☒ Urban or large central city
  - ☐ Suburban with characteristics typical of an urban area
  - ☐ Suburban
  - ☐ Small city or town in a rural area
  - ☐ Rural
3. Number of students as of October 1, 2015 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent in applying school:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK	0	0	0
K	31	34	65
1	22	35	57
2	12	26	38
3	24	28	52
4	28	38	66
5	23	37	60
6	33	45	78
7	31	31	62
8	21	39	60
9	0	0	0
10	0	0	0
11	0	0	0
12 or higher	0	0	0
Total Students	225	313	538

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native  
0 % Asian  
98 % Black or African American  
0 % Hispanic or Latino  
0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander  
0 % White  
2 % Two or more races  
**100 % Total**

(Only these seven standard categories should be used to report the racial/ethnic composition of your school. The Final Guidance on Maintaining, Collecting, and Reporting Racial and Ethnic Data to the U.S. Department of Education published in the October 19, 2007 *Federal Register* provides definitions for each of the seven categories.)

5. Student turnover, or mobility rate, during the 2014 – 2015 school year: 6%

This rate should be calculated using the grid below. The answer to (6) is the mobility rate.

Steps For Determining Mobility Rate	Answer
(1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2014 until the end of the 2014-2015 school year	14
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2014 until the end of the 2014-2015 school year	20
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	34
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2014	536
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.063
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	6

6. English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 0 %  
1 Total number ELL

Specify each non-English language represented in the school (separate languages by commas):

Mandingo

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 65 %  
Total number students who qualify: 359

8. Students receiving special education services: 1 %  
7 Total number of students served

Indicate below the number of students with disabilities according to conditions designated in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Do not add additional conditions. It is possible that students may be classified in more than one condition.

<u>0</u> Autism	<u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment
<u>0</u> Deafness	<u>1</u> Other Health Impaired
<u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness	<u>0</u> Specific Learning Disability
<u>0</u> Emotional Disturbance	<u>6</u> Speech or Language Impairment
<u>0</u> Hearing Impairment	<u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury
<u>0</u> Mental Retardation	<u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness
<u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities	<u>0</u> Developmentally Delayed

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 2

10. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below:

	Number of Staff
Administrators	2
Classroom teachers	30
Resource teachers/specialists e.g., reading, math, science, special education, enrichment, technology, art, music, physical education, etc.	17
Paraprofessionals	2
Student support personnel e.g., guidance counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	4

11. Average student-classroom teacher ratio, that is, the number of students in the school divided by the FTE of classroom teachers, e.g., 22:1 18:1

12. Show daily student attendance rates. Only high schools need to supply yearly graduation rates.

Required Information	2014-2015	2013-2014	2012-2013	2011-2012	2010-2011
Daily student attendance	98%	98%	98%	98%	98%
High school graduation rate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

13. **For high schools only, that is, schools ending in grade 12 or higher.**

Show percentages to indicate the post-secondary status of students who graduated in Spring 2015.

Post-Secondary Status	
Graduating class size	0
Enrolled in a 4-year college or university	0%
Enrolled in a community college	0%
Enrolled in career/technical training program	0%
Found employment	0%
Joined the military or other public service	0%
Other	0%

14. Indicate whether your school has previously received a National Blue Ribbon Schools award.

Yes X No

If yes, select the year in which your school received the award. 2008

15. In a couple of sentences, provide the school's mission or vision statement.

John P. Freeman Optional School's mission is to promote student development through building and strengthening family and community partnerships that support academic and character growth.

**16. For public schools only**, if the school is a magnet, charter, or choice school, explain how students are chosen to attend.

Kindergarten students enroll at John P. Freeman through a district choice transfer application process. Students in first through eighth grades attend John P. Freeman through an optional (magnet) transfer process. Applicants must meet standardized assessment scores, satisfactory conduct, and attendance requirements to be eligible for enrollment.

Students applying for first and second grade are given the magnet schools nationally normed admittance tests at the school. No other tests are accepted. Students are required to score at or above the 65th percentile in total reading and total math on the admittance tests. Third through eighth grade applicants must score at or above the 65th percentile on the Reading/Language Arts and Mathematics subtests of the TCAP/Tennessee Academic, or other nationally normed achievement tests.

On the most recent report card, all applicants for grades two through eight must have satisfactory conduct in academic and support subjects. The applicant's latest comprehensive report card must show all A's and B's with no more than one C as a semester average in all subjects. For renewals, applicants must maintain an overall C average or above in academic courses for semester averages and satisfactory or above grades in support subjects. There may be no F's or U's on the report card.

All new and renewal applicants must have satisfactory conduct, skills and behaviors, and attendance (including promptness to school and each class). A total of more than 15 absences, late arrivals, and/or early dismissals is considered unsatisfactory. Parental support regarding these requirements is needed to ensure or students' academic success. Final approval is contingent upon the review of the student's final comprehensive report card.

## PART III – SUMMARY

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John P. Freeman Optional, a Title I public school within the Shelby County Schools district, has a population of 538 students. The school is located on nearly 40 acres of land at the corner of Tulane and Holmes Road in the Whitehaven area of Memphis, TN. John P. Freeman's state-of-the-art facilities feature two well-equipped computer labs, mobile laptop carts, SMART Boards (interactive whiteboards), modern science labs, a gymnasium, stage, and other amenities used for athletic purposes. For the past 28 years, we have been the only free-standing magnet (optional) program for grades one through eight within our district. John P. Freeman offers a focus on programs that provide students with the rigor they need to prepare for high school and post-secondary studies: Enriched Academics (1-5), College Preparatory (6-8), and STEM (6-8). In addition to John P. Freeman's outstanding academic program, the school offers a wide range of extracurricular activities. To bridge the gap between Kindergarten and 1st grade, open enrollment was extended in 2008 to offer a high quality program for Kindergarten students, which is not part of the magnet program. Our school has received many accolades on state and national levels for our student achievement and exceptional faculty.

The instructional staff at John P. Freeman believes it is important to instill a love for learning early to ensure academic success for all learners. To that end, Kindergarten teachers participate in vertical planning to ensure they provide an enriched and challenging curricular program. Due to exposure to best practices under the current leadership, Kindergarten students are meeting the 1st grade magnet requirements at an accelerated rate. This increase is particularly remarkable in that Kindergarten students are successfully achieving at higher rates when they score on the 1st grade reading and math admittance tests.

Each student entering Grades 1-8 must apply for admission by transfer application. Admission criteria include: satisfactory skills, conduct, grades, and attendance, including promptness to school and to class (no more than 15 absences, late arrivals, and/or early dismissals for the year).

Collaboration among all stakeholders is an integral component in engaging and empowering the scholars of John P. Freeman. The school's climate and culture are driven by its mission, belief, and vision statements. In Professional Learning Communities, teachers analyze student data, share best practices, and critique student work in order to create a learning environment that promotes high achievers. The curriculum requires teachers to follow researched-based practices that include Gradual Release of Responsibility, which moves from teacher-directed instruction to student-centered instruction. Teachers and students go through a cycle of modeling, guided practice, cooperative learning, and independent practice that is directly linked to district, state, and national standards. Teachers use professional development to enhance their pedagogical content knowledge and help boost students' critical thinking skills in order to create a pathway to high school, college, career, or workforce.

John P. Freeman was one of two schools from Tennessee selected as a National Title I Distinguished School (2013). The Tennessee Department of Education selected John P. Freeman to receive this prestigious honor based on the success of its educational programs and progress made by students. Other awards received by John P. Freeman include the Tennessee State Distinguished Title I Award for Exceptional Student Performance (2011-2012) and Tennessee Reward School for students performing in the top 5% (2013-2015). Additionally, one of four National Board Certified teachers received the Presidential Award for Excellence in Science Teaching (2010) and the Horace Mann Award for Teaching Excellence (2013).

In 2008, John P. Freeman was selected as a No Child Left Behind Blue Ribbon School by the U.S. Department of Education. This previous Blue Ribbon School award further launched us into the public spotlight receiving more attention for our consistent levels of success. Since receiving this award we have made several changes in our educational program based on the Common Core shifts in math and English Language Arts (ELA). A special emphasis has been placed on reading complex texts (fiction and nonfiction), answering text-dependent questions, citing evidence, and using the Cornell note-taking system to enrich and strengthen needs in all content areas. Our daily schedule has built-in time for academic intervention with face-to-face teacher interaction and computer-based programs. During common planning time, teachers meet weekly to collaborate, share best practices, and analyze data to maximize student academic and social success.

Family and community partnerships help us to create a safe and secure learning environment to advance student learning and development. It also creates community consensus around what is best for our school environment. To this end, there is a strong commitment to promoting excellence within and outside our school. In creating a network of support our students are meeting and exceeding high expectations as they lead the quest for excellence in their home, school, and community.



## PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

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### 1. Core Curriculum:

John P. Freeman Optional School's core curriculum is aligned with Tennessee Academic Standards for Reading/English Language Arts, Mathematics, Science and Social Studies/History. Common Core Mathematical and Reading Language Arts shifts drive our instruction. Our curriculum is based on district, state, and national standards.

John P. Freeman uses the Journeys series for Grades K-5, Pearson Literature programs for Grades 6-8, and the school-wide writing plan to teach our Reading/English Language Arts TN Academic Standards. Students' literacy skills are strengthened through learning stations, small group and individual instruction, book studies, the use of complex text (non-fiction/fiction), and close reading strategies. This creates a strong literacy culture in our school. These strategies and methods assist with creating stronger writers. The data from I-Station, easyCBM, MICA, and NWEA is used to plan, instruct, remediate, and enrich to meet the needs of all learners.

The mathematical curriculum is designed to develop strong foundations through real-world application and hands-on learning experiences. We develop lessons using the Envision math program, Prentice Hall Math Connects, McGraw-Hill, and TN Academic Standards which include differentiation for all learners. Mathematical Practices are embedded to enrich mathematical content within and throughout each grade. As a school-wide initiative, students use annotation marks to solve mathematical tasks. Assessment data informs instruction and provides feedback in order to impact student learning. I-Ready, MICA, easyCBM, NWEA, math workstations, and cross curricular connections are used to solidify learning and increase academic achievement for students performing below and above grade level. Eighth grade qualifying students may elect to enroll in Algebra I.

The Social Studies/History curriculum uses an integrated approach focus on the 5 fields of study: culture, economics, history, civics, and geography for Grades K-8. Students are engaged in peer critiques and offer feedback through discussions. The program includes alternative forms of assessment, collaborative group activities, and map skills development. Students in Grades K-8 progressively develop and apply foundational skills by acquiring, organizing, and implementing information thus strengthening concepts and generalizations that provide opportunities to enhance higher order thinking. Graphic organizers, Cornell Notes, document based questions (DBQs), essay writing, citing evidence from the texts, and primary/secondary sources are tools and resources used to improve students performing below and above grade level skills. Eighth grade qualifying students may enroll in Pre-AP U.S. History.

Creative Learning in a Unique Environment (CLUE) is an enrichment program in Grades K-8 designed to meet the needs of intellectually gifted students. CLUE offers a highly motivational program where students have the opportunity to develop self-concept and skills in leadership, communication, creative thinking, logical thinking, and research.

John P. Freeman is a college preparatory school with a science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) focus. Research and problem solving skills are integrated throughout the science curriculum. We use an inquiry-based model for science instruction with Grades K-8. Students develop a conceptual understanding of science through inquiry, experimentation, and technological design. They work collaboratively to explore, ask questions, and discover solutions to real-world issues. In STEM, students use techniques that reflect the practices utilized by professionals. Students in Grades 4-8 may participate in the FIRST Lego League, a robotics program, which addresses scientific and real-world challenges like pollution, recycling, and reducing landfills. We offer an Inventions and Innovations class for Grade 7, and Technology Systems for Grade 8, which use STEM concepts to build, construct, program, and operate robots. Both programs utilize professionals to support, guide, and encourage students to pursue careers in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics.

In all core curricular areas, we practice higher order thinking, conducting research, facilitating learning in order to create a student-centered classroom. We assess students in a variety of ways, measurable vs. non-measurable, to engage and motivate all learners. Project based learning creates a learning environment where students are provided with opportunities to become solutions-oriented learners. To demonstrate learning, students know how to channel their voices to explain, share, agree or disagree which increases conceptual understandings and perspectives. Teachers respect, elevate, and celebrate student voice in class, in school, and in community. Our teachers understand that all students must receive a quality education.

## 2. Other Curriculum Areas:

John P. Freeman's visual and performing arts programs complement classroom instruction and extend student learning. Both programs integrate literacy, Mathematics, Social Studies/History, and Science into the curriculum.

Elementary students receive an hour of weekly instruction in the visual arts. Visual arts class in the middle school is an hour class per day for one semester as part of the magnet program. The visual arts are essential in cultivating creativity and problem solving skills. Math standards such as patterns, sequencing, symmetry, geometric shapes, and perspectives are also explored through art techniques. The National Science Education Standards are aligned with the art program through unit studies of the various science disciplines. Elements of art are addressed through literature and Social Studies/History. Time periods, cultural awareness, geographical connections, and a range of current events used to support students' acquisition of essential skills and knowledge.

The performing arts program includes Orff music, band, and orchestra. All elementary students receive an hour of instruction in Orff music per week while students in middle school participate in either band or orchestra for an hour daily. Approximately 115 students have elected to participate in band and 85 students have elected to participate in orchestra. The knowledge of skills that students acquire through the performing arts instruction include the abilities to solve problems, think critically and creatively, make informed decisions, work cooperatively, and appreciate different cultures.

The Health Physical Education Lifetime Wellness (HPELW) is a vital component of the curriculum at John P. Freeman. Elementary students receive 45-50 minutes of weekly instruction from the HPELW teacher, while middle school students receive an hour of daily HPELW instruction for a semester. The program supports the core curriculum by incorporating mathematics and science. Concepts such as force and motion, gravity, percentages, and calculations are integrated. Students write, discuss, explain, and demonstrate skills, methods, and procedures related to the HPELW curriculum. HPELW includes activities designed to provide students with knowledge and skills needed to become healthy productive adults. This program encourages growth, supports different learning styles, the development of critical thinking and problem solving, and effective group interactions to maintain their health and wellness. Studies in this area provide experiences that encourage the development of self-concept, confidence, independence, and self-control which help students increase academic success and critical thinking.

Foreign language instruction provides enrichment in Grades K-5 and in seventh grade. Elementary students meet an hour per week throughout the school year each while seventh grade students meet an hour daily for a semester. The Spanish curriculum has been designed to enhance student comprehension and abilities in reading, writing, mathematics, and other subjects. Students are exposed to the cultures of Spanish speaking countries by participating in cultural activities throughout the community. The goal is for all students in this program to become familiar with the Spanish language and promote global awareness.

The use of technology at John P. Freeman gives teachers the tools necessary to actively engage all learners. Every classroom is equipped with a SmartBoard and at least four computers to provide students with interactive lessons fostering higher levels of engagement and improving critical thinking skills. Additionally, there are two computer labs and fourteen mobile laptop computers carts that are available to students for research, keyboarding, and to aid with the Science Technology Engineering Mathematics (STEM) program. All teachers have access to document cameras and classroom performance systems (CPS), technological tools used to support assessment practices. Through the use of technology, students are

given the skills for college and career readiness that demand fluency in the understanding of computers and technology.

### 3. Instructional Methods and Interventions:

John P. Freeman assesses students for the purpose of collecting data to determine the instruction required and how it should be differentiated to meet the needs of all students. Collaboration is strategically focused on aligning Tennessee Academic Standards to the core curriculum, texts, tasks, and assessments that are appropriately challenging at each grade level. The gradual release approach ensures appropriate scaffolding and differentiation to connect prior knowledge to the objectives of the lesson. During learning stations, teachers provide differentiated texts and tasks to meet the needs of below, on, and above level students. Gradual release moves the students from explicit instruction to independent learning. Teachers provide direct instruction, modeling, and demonstration of the objectives. Students explain, evaluate, offer feedback, generate questions, summarize, and tell the importance of their learning. Gradual release is on-going throughout the year and culminates with students demonstrating content mastery.

Interventions are strategically planned to meet the needs of all learners. Grade level and subject area teachers share common planning time and meet in Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) to create common assessments, develop lesson plans, analyze and discuss quantitative and qualitative data, and share best practices. Discussions from these meetings allow teachers to plan lessons for below, on, and above grade level students.

Students are targeted and assigned interventions based on their assessment results. Interventions resources include i-Ready, i-Station, EasyCBM, MICA, and other forms of web-based support. All middle school students receive instruction in the school wide writing program during daily Advanced Training Classes (ATC). Middle school students who scored low or below proficiency in mathematics attend Advanced Training Classes once a week in small group where they build foundation skills, receive extra practice and support in areas of need. Interventionists use i-Ready, i-Station, and EasyCBM to pull out elementary students who score below grade level to provide additional practice and support on a daily basis. In addition, these programs are designed to provide extra practice to help students meet and exceed proficiency rates.

### 4. Assessment for Instruction and Learning and Sharing Assessment Results:

John P. Freeman uses a variety of assessment data to analyze and improve student and school performance. Examples of assessments include i-Ready, i-Station, Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA), MICA, easyCBM, benchmark, end of unit, informal, teacher-made, and grade level assessments.

Teachers use data systematically to improve instruction in student learning by collecting, analyzing, and utilizing data to plan instruction that meets the diverse instructional needs of below, on, and above grade level students. Grade level and content level area teachers meet weekly in common planning sessions and/or PLCs to analyze and discuss data. This data is used to drive instruction. Professional development is designed to address school wide results. School data is compiled and compared with the district and state to identify and address school wide growth and achievement. All stakeholders are informed of students' academic growth and achievement in a variety of ways. Parents receive data reports, progress reports, and graded papers in a weekly communication folder. Parents can monitor grades, attendance, and behavioral issues online daily through Parent Connect. Parents and stakeholders are informed about school-wide growth and achievement during Title I and PTSA meetings. All stakeholders can view displayed data in designated area within our school walls. Students review classroom data and set individual learning goals. A link on the school's web page provides the community with access to school wide growth and achievement.

School wide interventions, include i-Ready, i-station, Advanced Training Classes, MICA, small group instruction, and before/after school tutoring are utilized to close achievement gaps.

John P. Freeman is a high performing school. A variety of instructional practices, strategies, and methods are implemented to maintain high levels of achievement. The school leadership philosophy of John P. Freeman believes that developing teacher leadership is instrumental in transforming schools and supporting all students. Teacher-leaders demonstrate a purpose-driven approach to education, goal orientated, a growth mindset, a track record of strong teacher efficacy, utilize rigorous instructional practices, and exceptional skill in using data to drive improvements in instruction. A careful examination of the sequencing of course expectations ensure that all teachers in Grades K-8 have a clear understanding of what their students have been taught and what they will be taught.

## **PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS**

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### **1. School Climate/Culture:**

The mission statement for John P. Freeman Optional (Magnet) School concludes with a call for stakeholders to commit to and engage all students to daily lead the quest for excellence in order to compete globally. Student motivation and engagement is the key to making our mission attainable. John P. Freeman has many programs in place aimed at engaging our students academically, socially, physically, culturally and emotionally.

John P. Freeman frequently communicates student successes school wide in a variety of ways. Daily announcements highlight student accomplishments as well as provide students the opportunity to lead their peers in reciting the school's mission and promoting positive character traits. Student achievements are also posted on bulletin boards throughout the school, celebrated on the John P. Freeman's social media sites (Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, School Website), and broadcasted on Cable 19 (the school district's TV station). Another very successful method of engaging students is the ClassDojo, a classroom management tool. ClassDojo is used in many classrooms throughout the building to incentivize and reward positive behaviors. Furthermore, students' social and emotional growth is supported through a variety of activities, including but not limited to athletics, social and academic clubs and organizations, celebrations, recognitions, and internal/external counseling supports. One example of how membership in clubs and organizations impact student success is with the Art Club. A student who had lost her parent suddenly withdrew socially and had difficulty fitting in with her peers found her niche in the Visual Arts when her work was showcased in the 2014-2015 SCS Arts Fest.

John P. Freeman boasts an exceptional faculty that is an integral part of the positive school culture. To this end, we provide several leadership training options for the faculty to feel valued and supported. Teachers are invited to steer school interest committees, lead grade level teams, conduct professional development sessions (school wide/district level), and pursue school leadership pathways. As a result of the positive school climate and culture, John P. Freeman has been recognized with many awards and achievements. For the 2013-2015 school years, we were designated as a Tennessee Reward School, indicating our status in the top five percent of schools in the state based on performance. John P. Freeman students have also benefited from this culture of excellence by exhibiting academic success on the Explore test, with thirteen eighth grade students scoring a 20 (composite) or higher in 2015.

### **2. Engaging Families and Community:**

Building and strengthening family and community partnerships is essential for student growth at John P. Freeman Optional (Magnet) School. Teachers recognize the importance of parental communication and support in the learning process. An Annual Open House is held to showcase our school and foster positive relationships between school and home. Other avenues to assist parents with the home-school connection include: Parent Teacher Student Association (PTSA), Positive Behavior Intervention and Support (PBIS) School and Culture Advisory Team, volunteer coaching, and test proctors. Parents routinely volunteer to chaperone class parties, field trips, dances, and other activities. Teachers organize and invite parents to attend Date with Dad, Muffins with Mom, "Grandpairs" Day, and a host of other events.

Effective communication between school and home is critical to ensuring student success. Parents are able to access their children's grades through the Parent Connect website, which enables teachers and parents to hold students accountable. Additionally, messages are frequently sent to parents/guardians in an effort to keep everyone current on assessments, upcoming events, and relevant information. John P. Freeman utilizes School Messenger, social media sites, teacher/school websites, ClassDojo, school/grade-level newsletters, flyers, calendars, and weekly progress folders.

Various strategies are employed to enhance community engagement with stakeholders. John P. Freeman partner with Medtronics and the University of Memphis to expose students to STEM labs, professional mentors, and student ambassadors to assist students. The Tennessee Valley Authority annually sponsors

our participation in the First Lego League Competition and mentors student teams. These partnerships lead to increased student awareness and interest of STEM related careers and courses. Jackson State University Memphis Alumni Chapter annually hosts “Baby Tiger Day” for Grades K-2 to emphasize college/career readiness. We partner with local colleges/universities to provide student-teachers with a model of effective teaching. Student-teachers are paired with mentors who demonstrate effective instructional practice and data analysis. To teach the importance of service learning teachers organize events, partner with stakeholders, and contribute to the following charitable campaigns: Kids Can Food Drive; Go Jim Go! (Le Bonheur Children’s Hospital); Toy Drive (Goodwill Homes Community Services), Operation: Warm Hearts Coat Drive (Shelby County Schools), Wall of Hearts (Sickle Cell Foundation of Tennessee), and Pennies for Pasta (Leukemia and Lymphoma Society). John P. Freeman has also twice won the Wolf River Conservancy Environmental Stewardship Award for its effort toward cleaning up the Wolf River Watershed.

### 3. Professional Development:

John P. Freeman offers professional learning opportunities aligned with the District's Literacy Focus, Comprehensive Literacy Improvement Plan (CLIP) couched in Common Core Shifts for ELA. Proposed, planned, and facilitated by teacher leaders and administrators, professional learning is organized into four nine-week learning cycles over a year-long continuum with the goal of increasing student achievement. An example of a cycle implementation includes: a literacy focus centered on teachers’ use of and students’ understanding of complex text and writing tasks (Core Actions 1 and 2). Teachers were trained on the rubrics to determine a text’s complexity, close reading strategies like annotation, drafted an informal observation schedule, and created a feedback tool to monitor the action step. During the two week practice period the administrative team observed an increase from 7 teachers using complex texts and close reading to 30 teachers using complex texts and close reading.

Learning Walks are a common practice implemented across the district and school to assist with defining effectiveness across grade levels and content. A team consisting of teachers and administrators collaboratively observe their peers to reflect on teacher and student actions in relationship to identified focus areas from the TEM Rubric. A short team meeting is held to establish the “look-fors” and norm and calibrate a video prior to the observation. The observation is then followed by a short debriefing session among the team members. An outcome of one such learning walk revealed a need to develop a comprehensive writing plan.

Selected teachers met over a two-day period for the purpose of vertical teaming, to analyze school wide writing deficiencies, and devise a comprehensive writing plan that would align writing tasks to texts, and modes of writing each grade level are expected to produce. Teachers developed a toolkit of instructional strategies to assist students in grappling with complex text and writing tasks. This toolkit included annotation, close reading, Cornell Notes, and How-to documents for writing in response to different texts.

In an effort to increase student writing proficiency, teachers engage in collaborative discussions in PLCs to review student writing samples, determine re-teaching strategies, at-risk students, share and model writing strategies and tools in real-time.

Our professional development practices leverage educator strengths to engage all students in meaningful, relevant learning opportunities that increase student achievement. The impact of our efforts has been monumental in developing and sustaining a collegiate environment where learning communities use their collective strengths, skills, and experiences to improve classroom practice.

### 4. School Leadership:

The school leadership philosophy of John P. Freeman Optional School is based solidly on a belief in the importance of developing teacher-leaders in order to transform schools and support all students. Teacher-leaders at John P. Freeman must demonstrate instructional effectiveness as measured by classroom observation and student achievement. However, just as importantly, teacher-leaders must demonstrate the following characteristics in their actions inside and outside the classroom: a belief that all children can

achieve, a purpose-driven goal oriented approach to teaching and learning, a growth mindset, a track record of strong teacher efficacy, and exceptional skill in using data to drive improvements in student achievement and changes in teacher practice.

Career pathway opportunities are provided to teachers to ensure that all children have access to highly effective teachers. We have teacher-leaders who have pursued advanced degrees and leadership opportunities such as, leading professional development, writing curriculum, mentoring new teachers, and working outside the school walls to serve all students. These teacher-leaders work with the administrative team as early adopters of new ideas and initiatives on how to implement solutions to enhance our learning environment. Also, teacher leaders are encouraged and recommended to enact positive change by joining advocacy groups to lift teacher voice around policies and practices.

On a monthly basis, the teacher-leader team meets with the principal, the assistant principal, the PLC coach, and the magnet programs coordinator to address emerging issues and work on identified activities. Over the past year, it has been the school's focus to develop a culture for all teachers to have a clear understanding of learning progressions. Teacher input and feedback is gathered from the teacher members of the Instructional Leadership Team (ILT) and decisions points are communicated during PLCs and whole group faculty meetings. Monthly Site-based Decision Making Council (SBDMC) meetings are held to inform stakeholders of achievement results, goals, instructional and co-curricular needs. The needs are prioritized and then consensus is built for the goals that will be supported.

Informal and formal observations of teachers by the principal, assist principal, and PLC coach help to provide teachers with feedback, and refinement strategies in relationship to instructional effectiveness as measured by TEM. Teachers are able to use the feedback to reflect, refine, and strengthen their pedagogical knowledge. After each meeting teachers fill out open response evaluations to provide meaningful feedback to the ILT. Teachers can share information learned, important moments, and remaining questions on these evaluations. This practice allows teachers to leverage their voice to inform their own learning opportunities.

## Part VI – INDICATORS OF ACADEMIC SUCCESS

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The principal and other school leaders at John P. Freeman believe strongly that the K-8 format of the school is one of its strengths, lending itself to a nurturing and stable environment for students. The principal credits the vertical teaming approach to the school's recent success in preparing a growing number of its Kindergarten students to meet eligibility for the magnet program and its continuing low mobility rate (less than 7% in 2014-15, in contrast to over 30% for the district as a whole). The school's low mobility rate is even more remarkable in that all families must provide their own transportation to the school and John P. Freeman families live in a total of 21 zip codes spread across the Memphis area.

The K-8 configuration coupled with vertical teaming is instrumental to strengthening teachers' capacity to plan and execute age appropriate challenging lessons that reflect focused sequencing of complex texts, tasks, assessments, and experiences for all students. More specifically, vertical teaming enhances teachers' view of student needs and the gaps that exist when students present deficiencies with a particular standard. Therefore, making their common planning time more meaningful. Vertical teaming also allows teachers to discuss ways to improve their own practice as they connect across grade levels and content.

During vertical team planning sessions, thoughtful consideration is given to grade/course expectations, district/school wide initiatives, student data, and teacher observation data to inform the focus for each Nine Week Learning Cycle which includes: Professional Development, Learning Walks, Focus Strategy, Monitoring Tools, Measures of Success, and Supports.

Vertical teaming creates continuity across the grades, for example, learning walks are conducted as vertical teams. The most recent learning walk allowed middle school ELA teachers to visit the K-5 classrooms to observe how early grade teachers exceed expectations for differentiating instruction using learning stations. During these observations, middle school teachers gained the awareness of how to create personalized work stations for diverse learners. Teachers are able to get a more hands-on approach to creating coherence across the grades in an effort to bridge gaps in the learning process. Teacher practice is positively impacted by their peers. With John P. Freeman being a K-8th school in one building students benefit greatly from the continuity and seamless transition toward academic achievement.